

# Barracks renovations improve quality of life for military personnel in Baumholder

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In October 1995, Europe District was represented by one construction representative in Baumholder, Germany. Today, a twelve-person resident office is in place and is expected to grow to 20 full-time employees near the first of the year.

The driving force behind this staffing growth is the barracks renovation program in progress in Baumholder. One of the largest renovation programs in U.S. Army, Europe (USAREUR), it includes the renovation of over 80 barracks in Baumholder before its completion in 2002.

Currently, there are 24 barracks under construction in Baumholder, each costing approximately \$2.5 million and typically taking a year to complete. A total of 31 barracks have been renovated to date; 15 to the 2+2 standard and 16 to the 1+1 standard. These barracks upgrades represent a construction placement of approximately \$70 million in fiscal year 1999.

The unrenovated 1930's barracks have two-to-three soldiers per room, with gang toilets and shower facilities. The new renovation program involves upgrading the building to USAREUR's standard 1+1 design.

Once complete, each three-story barracks building will average 34 single rooms for enlisted

soldiers. Each room will share a private bathroom with a sink, toilet and shower. The rooms are also wired for a private German telephone line and cable TV, a welcome change for soldiers who are used to pay phones and TV only in the lounge. A kitchenette will be located on both living floors. The attics will have a large training/recreation room, a TV lounge area, and a storage locker for each resident. The basements will have office space, a laundry room, a weight room, an equipment cleaning room and public bathrooms with showers for soldiers who live off-post to use after physical training.

From an engineering perspective, the most interesting part of this renovation project is the major structural work required to demolish the existing interior walls and floors and rebuild them, while leaving the exterior walls in place. The exterior walls of the buildings are braced, usually with sixty foot logs set in concrete footings. The roof loads, which had been carried by both exterior and interior walls, are redistributed so they are carried only by the bracing and exterior walls.

The interior demolition is most impressive; all walls and floors are removed, leaving the interior completely empty inside the three story building. The interior is then rebuilt from the bottom with concrete floors and masonry walls. The bracing, demolition and reconstruction usually takes four months to complete. Afterward, the electrical, mechanical and architectural renovation begins.

"It's amazing to see the entire building empty," said Construction Representative Brad Reeves. "It shows how durable this old construction really is."

"But our job can be tough," he added. "The buildings look similar on the outside, but with every building, we encounter slightly different structural conditions. They were all built so quickly in the late 1930's that field changes were common and not documented. You really can't be sure how a building is put together until you're halfway through the demolition. It can make for a challenging job."

Europe District has been working closely with the community, especially Base Support Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Nick Miller, and Directorate of Public Works Chief Robert Baumgardt, to keep the post operational. Road closures due to construction and utility outages are daily events.

A true engineering team has been formed to



**A Baumholder soldier enjoys some leisure time in his newly renovated barracks room, located on Smith Barracks. (Photo by Torrie McAllister)**



**Over 80 barracks are being renovated in Baumholder, under U.S. Army, Europe's barracks renovation program. (Photo by Torrie McAllister)**

minimize any impact to the military community. The team, consisting of the 104th Area Support Group (ASG), the Baumholder (DPW), and Europe District, have worked out a seamless process of awarding and administering construction contracts for the project.

Weekly meetings keep the post aware of construction activities. Monthly meetings with 104th ASG DPW Commander Lt. Col. Floyd Quintana, and 104th ASG DPW Deputy Sean McDonald, inform everyone of the ongoing construction status.

This communication has made the program run very smoothly, allowing the community to know in advance which buildings will be renovated next, and letting the troops know when they can move back into their newly renovated barracks.

With so little “swing space” in Baumholder, the big question often asked is “where will the soldiers be housed while the barracks are under construction?” This limits the number of barracks that can be renovated at one time.

To further complicate the housing problem, the troops have been shuttling between Bosnia and Baumholder on an irregular schedule. Recently, because of the close communication and planning between the Baumholder Resident Office, the DPW and the 222nd BSB, the Corps was able to rephase the renovation construction of several barracks, to allow for the completion of other barracks renovations, while keeping soldiers comfortably housed.

For the 1st Armored Division troops who recently returned from Bosnia and Macedonia, the renovated barracks are a welcome sight.

The Baumholder barracks renovation program has recently gained a large amount of attention from high ranking visitors, and the soldiers who directly benefit from the renovations.

Recent visitors to Smith Barracks include Gen. Eric Shinseki, Lt. Gen. Robert S. Coffey, and Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Dr. Joseph W. Westphal.

This renovation program is just one more step in the implementation of the BSB Commander's Mission Statement, which states — “Baumholder is a community to which soldiers, civilians and families aggressively seek assignment, and once here, never want to leave.”

**Gen. Eric Shinseki (pictured left) toured the Baumholder Barracks Renovation Program in November 1998. During his visit, he recognized Elizabeth Burkhart of the Baumholder Resident Office (pictured right) with a coin for her hard work and dedication on the project. Lt. Col. Nick Miller, 222nd Base Support Battalion Commander is pictured center. (Photo courtesy of the Baumholder Resident Office)**

